

The *Empathy-Index* Report

Empathy-Index scores are provided as follows:

1. **Each Question**- Each partner receives an *Empathy-Index* score for every question. This is calculated as the difference between what partner "A" thought partner "B" would answer and what partner "B" actually answered. For example, if "A" thought "B" would answer 7 and "B" actually answered 3, the *Empathy Index* for partner "A" is 4.

2. **Each Group**- Each partner also receives an *Empathy-Index* score for each of the six Groups. These six groups are:

- a. Self-Perception
- b. Health & Personal Lifestyle
- c. Sexuality
- d. Conflict Resolution
- e. Morality & Spirituality
- f. Relationship Style

Each question is assigned to at least one of the above groups. The individual *Empathy-Index* scores in each category are added and averaged. A sample score might be 2.3. It is normal to have different scores for different groups.

3. **Overall *Empathy-Index***- Each partner will receive an Overall *Empathy-Index* score. This is the calculated average of all questions answered.

4. **Partnership *Empathy-Index***- This is the average of both partners' *Empathy-Index* scores.

Interpreting the *Empathy-Index* scores

Empathy-Index scores can range from 0 to 8. The lower the *Empathy-Index* number, the greater the understanding and empathy that is present. However, the score, itself, is far less important than the communication and dialogue that results from the questionnaire. Use the report commentary that is presented with each question as a starting point. During review and discussion, be open and honest with your partner about issues that one or both of you may not have been aware of. In general, scores fall into these three categories:

- 0 thru 2:** Excellent empathy. You understand and can accurately predict how your partner will respond in most situations.
- 3 thru 5:** You are communicating your feelings and views. However, there is room for improvement.
- 6 thru 8:** This should be an area of concern. It may be only a single area, but there may be a lack of communication or understanding that is involved.

Resources

Wherever appropriate or possible, resources are provided.

Your Question Responses

1. Do you think it is desirable to know everything possible about your partner's past?

No = 1 9 = Yes

Diane thought Robert would answer: 3	Robert answered: 1	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 2	Diane answered: 1	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

We all have a different sense of privacy with regard to our past. You may or may not agree on how many of the details are appropriate, but certainly any information that affects the health or well being of your partner is relevant, and your partner deserves to be informed. Put yourself in your partner's shoes. If the situation were reversed, would you consider this information important?

Total disclosure of one's past, however, may not always be the most beneficial for the relationship. Ask yourself: Will my partner benefit from this information? Will this information serve to strengthen our relationship? Am I unnecessarily burdening my partner with my own guilt and, perhaps, opening a can of worms that can be potentially destructive to the relationship?

If your partner discloses something sensitive from his or her past, it is vital that you not use this information as a weapon later on. If you are uncomfortable talking about something in your past, ask your partner to respect your wishes on that topic, and be willing to ask your partner for the support that would be most helpful.

2. Do you tend to be spontaneous, or do you prefer to plan things out?

Spontaneous = 1 9 = Meticulous planner

Diane thought Robert would answer: 4	Robert answered: 2	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 3	Diane answered: 2	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

We all have our methods of dealing with the myriad of life's events. Some need to plan down to the finest detail, while others prefer to "wing it." Tensions build when we try to mold our partner's style to our own. Being able to recognize and accept each other's outlook and mode of operation can ease the tension and build rapport for the event or action.

Note: Either polarity can be taken to the extreme. An irresponsible person can rationalize his or her behavior by claiming to be spontaneous, and a control freak can try to justify rigidity as efficient planning. Both extremes may benefit from some counseling.

Assuming that you both fall within the continuum of reasonable spontaneity and meticulous planning, open up the communication between you about what this issue means to you. Ask your partner for any support that will help you both find a balance between the two polarities. See the Resources page.

3. Are you more likely to express your love in words or actions?

Words = 1 9 = Actions

Diane thought Robert would answer: 5	Robert answered: 3	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 4	Diane answered: 3	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

We all express our love and affection in unique ways. Some feel more at home expressing love in words; others find it more comfortable to express their love in actions. Both are valid forms of expression and deserve to be acknowledged.

In an intimate relationship, most of us want our partner to anticipate our needs and our desire for affection without having to actually communicate them. But it's not fair or realistic to expect your partner to be "psychic of the year."

Sit with your partner and take turns telling each other all the ways that you feel you express love. For instance, "When I take out the trash, I'm expressing that I care for you and want to lighten your load a little." Or "When I put a love note in your pocket, I'm expressing my appreciation that you are in my life."

Likewise, if there are ways that you would like your partner to express love for you, take turns offering suggestions, like, "I would really like it if you told me that you love me more often." Or, "When you rub my shoulders after a long day, it really makes me feel appreciated."

4. Are you content with the way your partner expresses her/his affection privately?

No = 1 9 = Yes

Diane thought Robert would answer: 6	Robert answered: 4	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 6	Diane answered: 4	Robert's Empathy-Index: 2

Sit with your partner and take turns expressing what he or she does that really rings your bell regarding love and affection. Also, if your partner does something that you find uncomfortable, suggest ways that would better suit you. This may seem like a difficult conversation at first, but honest communication of our feelings and boundaries can deepen and enrich an intimate relationship. If

disagreements about private display of affection are a continuing source of conflict in your relationship, you may benefit from some private or couples counseling. See the Resources page.

5. Are you content with the way that your partner expresses her/his affection towards you in public?

No = 1 9 = Yes

Diane thought Robert would answer: 7	Robert answered: 5	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 5	Diane answered: 5	Robert's Empathy-Index: 0

Our comfort levels with public displays of affection were probably established early in life, depending on our family, culture, and religion. What seems appropriate to one person may seem excessive to another. It is important to understand our own boundaries and respect the boundaries of our partner. If you are uncomfortable in the way your partner expresses affection, discuss it openly. All relationships require negotiation so that both partners' needs are being honored and fulfilled.

Take turns telling each other what you enjoy or find uncomfortable about displaying affection in public. If you are uncomfortable in some way, let your partner know what would be more comfortable for you. Be aware of sensitive issues. For instance, a woman who shies away from holding hands might explain, under gentle prodding, that the only time that her father held her hand was when she was going to be punished. Be sensitive to a partner's wishes. If disagreements about public display of affection are a continuing source of conflict in your relationship, you may benefit from some counseling. See the Resources page.

6. When angry, are you more likely to express your anger openly, or withdraw and remain silent?

Silent = 1 9 = Very Expressive

Diane thought Robert would answer: 8	Robert answered: 6	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 7	Diane answered: 6	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

If there has ever been a person in history who never became angry over something that his or her partner did or said, we would very much like to meet that person. Even the healthiest relationship will sometimes trigger anger in one or both partners. How one deals with anger can have a tremendous impact on the success of a relationship.

Regardless of whether you express your anger directly or withdraw in silence, recognizing anger, and identifying its root, is the first step in resolving it. Often underneath anger lies fear, hurt or sadness. Take a look at why you are angry and how it makes you feel.

If you have a tendency to withdraw into silence, take some time to identify what is really bothering you, then express your feelings clearly.

If you most often express your anger directly, take a look at your expression. Are you able to communicate clearly, or do you fly off the handle and raise your voice ... or worse?

Anger is a powerful emotion, and we need to be careful in its expression. Words once spoken, like the sped arrow, can never be taken back. It is helpful to communicate to your partner that it is his or her behavior that is bothering you, and that you are not attacking him or her as a person.

It is vital to avoid using the words "always" and "never." For instance, rather than saying "You always leave your socks on the floor for me to pick up, and I'm sick and tired of it!", try "When you leave your socks on the floor, I feel unappreciated and taken for granted."

On the receiving end of this communication, listen to what your partner is saying. Rather than getting defensive and volleying back, "Well, you always leave toothpaste in the sink, and it's disgusting!", listen to your partner and really try to understand how he or she feels. Put yourself in your partner's shoes. How would you feel if the situation were reversed?

Try this exercise:

Sit with your partner and tell him or her what has made you angry, using the "When you..., I feel..." model of communication. Then negotiate win-win solutions for the issue. If anger manifests in verbal or physical abuse, see the Resources page.

7. How jealous would you be if your partner paid special attention to an attractive person at a party?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very jealous

Diane thought Robert would answer: 9	Robert answered: 7	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 8	Diane answered: 7	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

We all interpret each other's behavior and the world around us in unique ways. What one person considers innocent flirtation may seem like flagrant infidelity to another.

It is important to communicate your feelings on this issue. For a relationship to deepen and mature, a solid foundation of trust must

be built. Your relationship needs to be the place where you feel absolutely safe.

If some behavior by your partner makes you uncomfortable, discuss it. Use the "When you..., I feel...." model of communication, instead of accusing or attacking your partner. Your partner may have no idea that his or her behavior concerns or hurts you. Expressing how you feel clears the air and opens the lines of communication.

When your partner expresses his or her feelings to you, listen from your heart. Tell your partner how much you care. We all respond to loving reassurance that we are the most special person in the world to our partner.

If flirtation is a repeated source of conflict in your relationship, you may benefit from some personal or couples counseling. See the Resources page.

8. If your partner did pay special attention to an attractive person at a party, would you be more likely to stay away or would you join them?

Stay away = 1 9 = Join them

Diane thought Robert would answer: 1	Robert answered: 8	Diane's Empathy-Index: 7
Robert thought Diane would answer: 9	Diane answered: 8	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

In this case, what you do is not as important as why you would do it. Explore your feelings. Would you join them because you feel secure in your relationship and want to be involved in what appears to be an interesting conversation? Or would you join them because you feel insecure and want reassurance?

Likewise, would you stay away because you feel secure in your relationship and presume that the interaction is innocent? Or would you stay away because you are insecure or afraid that you might appear less attractive or intelligent in comparison to the other person?

Take turns sharing your reasons for your behavior with your partner. Listen with your heart to your partner. Ask your partner for any support or assistance that you need or would like.

9. Do you tend to be more critical of your partner, or more complimentary?

Critical = 1 9 = Complimentary

Diane thought Robert would answer: 2	Robert answered: 9	Diane's Empathy-Index: 7
Robert thought Diane would answer: 9	Diane answered: 9	Robert's Empathy-Index: 0

Intimacy allows us to witness our partner's good qualities as well as vulnerabilities. How we use this information can greatly influence the quality of our relationship.

We all flourish when we feel acknowledged and appreciated. It is very important that we recognize and acknowledge those things that we appreciate in our partner. It's easy to get caught up in the activities and responsibilities in our lives and start to take our partner for granted.

Some try to rationalize criticism as an attempt to help a partner to grow and become the best that they can be. Constructive criticism is a far cry from belittlement and humiliation. Beware the words you use - the spoken word, like the sped arrow, can never be taken back!

Sit with your partner and take turns telling each other what you appreciate about each other. If criticism is a problem in your relationship, you may benefit from couples counseling. Continuous criticism can be abusive. See the Resources page.

10. How comfortable are you with your physical appearance?

Very Uncomfortable = 1 9 = Very Comfortable

Diane thought Robert would answer: 3	Robert answered: 1	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 1	Diane answered: 1	Robert's Empathy-Index: 0

We are most often our own worst critic when it comes to our physical appearance. But those features or characteristics that we consider flaws are rarely seen as such by a loving partner. Love and respect deepen our perception of each other and help us see the unique beauty of our partner. Understanding how your partner feels about his or her appearance helps you to be sensitive and responsive to his or her needs.

If you are comfortable with your physical appearance, then good for you. If not, ask yourself:

By whose standard am I judging my appearance?

Okay, so I'm not perfect according to this standard, so what?

What do I like best about my appearance?

What support would be helpful in focusing on the things that I like?

Try this exercise:

Sit opposite your partner, and take turns pointing out features and characteristics that you appreciate about each other. If you would like support in any area of working on your appearance, ask your partner for the specific support that you would like.

11. Do you (or would you) feel awkward or uncomfortable if your partner watches you bathe or get dressed?

I do not like it = 1 9 = Absolutely okay

Diane thought Robert would answer:	4	Robert answered:	2	Diane's Empathy-Index:	2
Robert thought Diane would answer:	2	Diane answered:	2	Robert's Empathy-Index:	0

We all have a different sense of privacy resulting from our cultural, social, and religious backgrounds, coupled with our own life experiences. Regardless of whether or not you are comfortable dressing (or undressing) in front of your partner, it is important to be clear on what your personal boundaries are, and communicate them to your partner. Understanding how each other feels on this issue and respecting those feelings builds a solid base of trust. Over time, one or both of you may find that your comfort level changes. Tell each other how you feel, and have fun exploring your growing intimacy.

12. How physically fit do you consider yourself?

Not fit at all = 1 9 = Very fit

Diane thought Robert would answer:	5	Robert answered:	3	Diane's Empathy-Index:	2
Robert thought Diane would answer:	1	Diane answered:	3	Robert's Empathy-Index:	2

It is often said that health is our true wealth. Serious illness, genetic pre-dispositions, and physical limitations aside, we all enjoy life more when we feel physically fit. Do you need support in staying physically fit? Tell your partner how he or she can support you.

13. How willing are you to change your behavior to improve your health?

Not willing = 1 9 = Very willing

Diane thought Robert would answer:	6	Robert answered:	4	Diane's Empathy-Index:	2
Robert thought Diane would answer:	2	Diane answered:	4	Robert's Empathy-Index:	2

Most of us know what we need to do to improve our health, but we often don't do what we know would be helpful. Why not make improving your health enjoyable? Set realistic goals, and find ways to support each other in attaining those goals. You might want to consider exploring a new sport or activity together, such as taking a dance class or sailing lessons.

For instance, if you want support from your partner in losing weight, tell him or her exactly how they can help. (Hint: embarrassing or shaming your partner with regard to his or her weight is seldom helpful.)

14. How much effort do you expend to maintain your health?

Very little = 1 9 = A lot

Diane thought Robert would answer:	7	Robert answered:	5	Diane's Empathy-Index:	2
Robert thought Diane would answer:	3	Diane answered:	5	Robert's Empathy-Index:	2

Even a small investment in our health pays dividends. No need for a lecture here - the most important thing is that you are honest with yourself. There are countless resources to help us maintain a healthy body, mind and spirit. See the Resources page for some suggestions.

15. Do you, generally, make an effort to eat nutritious foods?

No = 1 9 = Yes

Diane thought Robert would answer:	8	Robert answered:	6	Diane's Empathy-Index:	2
Robert thought Diane would answer:	4	Diane answered:	6	Robert's Empathy-Index:	2

Choices... choices... choices... Never before has so much nutritional information been available, along with every imaginable dietary concept. Everything from breatharians who believe they can live without food altogether to junk food junkies who wear a path to the drive-through window. Busy lifestyles have given rise to the convenience of fast food, and stress tends to make processed "comfort foods" more and more attractive.

The evidence is clear, however, that a balanced diet consisting of lean protein, complex (unrefined) carbohydrates from whole grains, healthy fats (especially the Omega 3s found in some fish and seeds), plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables with ample amounts of water contribute enormously to general health, longevity and wellbeing.

Eating healthy, wholesome foods is not that difficult. Even substituting one healthy meal for one fast food meal per week can go

miles toward improving your health and energy level. Check out the Resources page.

16. Is alcohol consumption, drug use, or other addictive behavior by you a problem in your relationship?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very much

Diane thought Robert would answer: 9	Robert answered: 7	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 5	Diane answered: 7	Robert's Empathy-Index: 2

Excessive alcohol consumption, drug use or other addictive behavior can erode the foundation of any relationship. Recognizing how our partner perceives our behavior can wake us up to a problem that we may not have recognized or been willing to admit. There is so much help available in this area for both partners. See the Resources page.

17. If you were home in bed with the flu, how much help and attention would you want from your partner?

None = 1 9 = Massive amounts

Diane thought Robert would answer: 1	Robert answered: 8	Diane's Empathy-Index: 7
Robert thought Diane would answer: 6	Diane answered: 8	Robert's Empathy-Index: 2

We all want more (or less) attention from time to time. Negotiating how much or how little takes some finesse. When ill, hearing "Eat your soup" may not sound very appetizing but it's probably safe to say that your partner has your best interests at heart. Likewise, if requested, try to respect your sick partner's wish for peace and solitude.

18. How would you rate your own personality?

Very unpleasant = 1 9 = Very pleasant

Diane thought Robert would answer: 2	Robert answered: 9	Diane's Empathy-Index: 7
Robert thought Diane would answer: 7	Diane answered: 9	Robert's Empathy-Index: 2

We all have our good days and our bad days. Our personalities, molded by our life experiences and social, cultural, and religious backgrounds, impact the people around us in myriad ways. At an early age, we formulate beliefs about ourselves, our relationships, and the world in general. Remember, there is absolutely no other person in the world that has your unique personality. Make the most of it by just being yourself! Intimacy and partnership provide a unique mirror in which we can see our attitudes and judgments reflected back to us from a loving partner.

Sit with your partner, and take turns telling each other what personality traits you find most attractive and endearing in each other.

If there are aspects of your own personality that you would like to change, ask your partner for the support that would be most helpful to you. Be very sensitive if you are asking your partner to change.

In the early stages of a relationship, it is easy to consider little idiosyncrasies of our partner to be endearing. As the relationship matures, however, it is possible for those very habits to become increasingly annoying, and even "unbearable." Rather than letting those small annoyances build, clear the air by lovingly communicating how you feel. (The point here is not to shame or humiliate your partner.) Then, together, negotiate a win-win solution.

If personality traits are a continuous source of conflict in your relationship, you may benefit from some couples counseling. See the Resources page.

19. How would you rate your own sense of humor?

None = 1 9 = Hilarious

Diane thought Robert would answer: 3	Robert answered: 9	Diane's Empathy-Index: 6
Robert thought Diane would answer: 8	Diane answered: 1	Robert's Empathy-Index: 7

A sense of humor is often at the top of the list of qualities that we find appealing in a partner. Life is easier when we see the brighter side of a situation and are able to laugh at ourselves a little.

Originally, the word humor was used to describe the essential body fluids considered responsible for a person's health and disposition. Laughter has often been referred to as 'the best medicine,' and the story of the man who cured himself of a life-threatening illness by watching old comedies has been told far and wide. Incorporate laughter into your daily wellness program by making sure that you find at least one thing to chuckle about each day.

Take a walk down memory lane. Sit with your partner and take turns finding the lighter side of things that you have experienced together. Be sure to include a memory or two of circumstances that seemed insurmountable at the time, but hold some humor in retrospect.

20. Is your sense of humor similar to or very different from your partner's?

Very similar = 1 9 = Very different

Diane thought Robert would answer: 4	Robert answered: 9	Diane's Empathy-Index: 5
Robert thought Diane would answer: 9	Diane answered: 2	Robert's Empathy-Index: 7

As antithetical as it might seem, humor can sometimes be hurtful. When we laugh at the expense of another's dignity or well-being, we can damage the relationship. This doesn't mean that you and your partner should always laugh at the same jokes, but be sensitive to your partner's feelings. For instance, if you make what seems to you to be a lighthearted reference to a particular trait of your partner at a party, be sure that your partner also finds this characteristic humorous, or you could be in deep trouble when you get home.

Passive aggression can often manifest in so-called humor, defended by, 'what's the matter? Can't you take a joke?' In reality, unresolved hostility is probably being expressed, and needs to be addressed. If hurtful humor is a recurring issue in your relationship, you might benefit from some counseling. See the Resources page.

21. How likely are you to do unconventional things with your partner, such as dancing to a favorite song in a parking lot or playing outside in the rain?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very likely

Diane thought Robert would answer: 5	Robert answered: 8	Diane's Empathy-Index: 3
Robert thought Diane would answer: 8	Diane answered: 3	Robert's Empathy-Index: 5

Each of us has a unique sense of decorum. Some love to dance in the rain and splash in the puddles, while others would be mortified. This isn't about right or wrong behavior, but rather about being sensitive to your partner's needs. It's also possible, though, that doing something unconventional together can be an exhilarating tonic in a relationship. Find the balance between spontaneity and conformity that works for you both.

22. How confident are you that you can select a gift that your partner would truly enjoy?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very confident

Diane thought Robert would answer: 6	Robert answered: 7	Diane's Empathy-Index: 1
Robert thought Diane would answer: 7	Diane answered: 4	Robert's Empathy-Index: 3

Gifts are given as tokens of friendship or love, often commemorating a special occasion or anniversary. What is considered an appropriate gift varies from culture to culture. In some societies, a very specific item is expected and anything else would be a major faux pas. In other cultures, anything goes.

From time to time, we all wish our partners were psychic and able to anticipate and fulfill our every desire. We think, 'If my partner really loves me, he or she will know exactly what I want.' This unrealistic expectation can only lead to disappointment.

Although it is the sentiment that counts, when presenting a token of love or friendship, make sure that you're not just imposing your interests or tastes on your partner. If your intention is to truly please your partner and you're not quite sure, it's okay to ask. We're not suggesting that the day before your partner's birthday, you ask, 'What do you want for your birthday, honey?' You'll probably get an answer you don't want!

Unless you are both so psychic that you never have trouble finding just the right thing, here's a suggestion:

Each of you makes a list of twelve gifts that would please you. Use your imagination. Include items that cover your various interests, and a variety of price ranges. Have fun with it! Exchange lists and surprise each other with what you have chosen. The list can be updated whenever it seems appropriate, and a separate list can include items that you specifically do not want your partner to give you. Of course, the items on your lists are only suggestions. Be careful to let go of both expectations as well as an undue sense of obligation. Ultimately, a gift is just that - a gift to be graciously accepted.

23. How much "personal time and space" do you need in your relationship?

None = 1 9 = A lot

Diane thought Robert would answer: 7	Robert answered: 6	Diane's Empathy-Index: 1
Robert thought Diane would answer: 5	Diane answered: 5	Robert's Empathy-Index: 0

Each individual has the need for personal time and space. How much and how often varies, but the need for 'down time' is universal and healthy. In solitude, we strengthen our connection to ourselves and restore our energy. Communication can break down when we are not able to express our needs, or we are unable to accept or accommodate the needs of our partner.

Needs change over time, especially with the arrival of children. Discuss with your partner your needs for time alone, and listen to your partner's needs. Find a way to accommodate both individuals' needs. Every couple will have a different balance - anything from 15 undisturbed minutes a day to separate vacations! Find what works for you, and be willing to adjust it when necessary.

24. Do you feel that your partner respects your need for personal time and space?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very much

Diane thought Robert would answer: 8	Robert answered: 5	Diane's Empathy-Index: 3
Robert thought Diane would answer: 4	Diane answered: 6	Robert's Empathy-Index: 2

Communication is essential for resolution of this issue. If you feel that your partner does not respect your need for personal time or space, talk frankly about it. Express your needs and how you would like them to be met.

Listen to the needs of your partner and help to create a plan to accommodate those needs. A successful relationship is one in which both partners have their needs met.

25. When you are emotionally depleted and need to "recharge your batteries" do you usually prefer to be alone or do you seek out the company of other people?

Alone = 1 9 = Seek Others

Diane thought Robert would answer: 9	Robert answered: 4	Diane's Empathy-Index: 5
Robert thought Diane would answer: 3	Diane answered: 7	Robert's Empathy-Index: 4

Some find that being with other people depletes their energy and they need to recharge their batteries by being alone. Others find the company of others stimulating and are energized by the interaction. Most of us fall somewhere in between these two polarities, depending on our circumstances, and our needs may evolve and change over time as we mature.

Anxiety and tension can develop in a relationship when partners do not recognize their own, and each other's, needs and do not take the steps necessary to fulfill them. By clearly communicating your evolving needs with each other, you and your partner can reach a win-win balance.

26. How much do you feel "heard" and "understood" by your partner?

Not at all = 1 9 = Completely

Diane thought Robert would answer: 1	Robert answered: 3	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 2	Diane answered: 8	Robert's Empathy-Index: 6

Being heard and understood builds a sense of security and self-esteem. Nothing erodes confidence more than feeling invisible, devalued or misunderstood by our partner. The skill of listening to each other is usually not an integral part of our education. Most of us listen through the filter of our own experiences and expectations, while formulating our response. We listen with the intention to respond, rather than the intention to actually hear what our partner is telling us.

Nothing squelches an argument faster than reflective listening - an exercise wherein you are not allowed to present your point of view until you have listened to, and then restated, your partner's point of view to his or her satisfaction showing that that you do, indeed, understand what has been said.

When either of you feels unheard or misunderstood, ask the other to engage in reflective listening. It's amazing how many problems can be solved by simply creating the space to give them voice.

27. How much respect do you feel your partner gives you?

None = 1 9 = Maximum

Diane thought Robert would answer: 2	Robert answered: 2	Diane's Empathy-Index: 0
Robert thought Diane would answer: 1	Diane answered: 9	Robert's Empathy-Index: 8

Respect is just one element of a healthy relationship, but without it, there's not much chance for the relationship to thrive. Respect is communicated in myriad ways- words, actions, tone of voice, facial expressions and body language, to mention just a few.

We cannot expect others to respect us if we do not respect ourselves. We teach others how to treat us by establishing what is acceptable within the relationship.

Sit with your partner and take turns telling each other those things that make you feel respected. If there are ways in which you feel disrespected, tell your partner how you feel, and suggest ways to improve the communication. Disrespect taken to the extreme is abuse. For help with an abusive relationship, see the Resources page.

28. Does your partner support your intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth?

Not at all = 1 9 = Completely

Diane thought Robert would answer: 3	Robert answered: 1	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 1	Diane answered: 1	Robert's Empathy-Index: 0

We are much more than what we see in the mirror. As whole human beings we have many needs on many levels beyond our physical needs in order to survive, and it is our own responsibility to ensure that those needs are met. A supportive partner can be a great help, but even without the support of a partner, we can make sure that we grow intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.

Each of you should make a list of your emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs, and the support you would like from your partner. Take turns sharing what you have written.

29. How much does tension from work affect your relationship with your partner?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very much

Diane thought Robert would answer: 4	Robert answered: 2	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 2	Diane answered: 2	Robert's Empathy-Index: 0

Juggling the responsibilities of career and family today is challenging, to say the least. Tension and anxiety builds, and it's easy to take it out on those closest to us. How we deal with stress can have a tremendous impact on our relationship. It is essential that we find healthy ways to de-stress, so that we're not just dumping it on our partner. Find what works for you - a quiet meditative walk, a sweaty aerobics class, yoga, an art or photography class, reading, a soft music and candle-lit bubble bath, whatever. Then take the time to actually do it. You deserve it and so does your partner.

30. How important are your partner's manners and courtesy to you?

Not important = 1 9 = Very important

Diane thought Robert would answer: 5	Robert answered: 3	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 4	Diane answered: 3	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

What are considered good manners and courteous behavior vary widely, depending upon one's cultural, social and religious background. How important these things are to each individual will also vary, and considerable disparity can become a source of conflict within the relationship. Behavior that one person considers "relaxed" may seem disrespectful to the other. Sometimes, manners are reserved for the public. Remember that everyone has the need to feel respected, and expressing appreciation and consideration for each other can go a long way in strengthening a relationship.

If the issue of manners and courtesy are a continuing source of conflict in your relationship, you may benefit from some couples counseling. See the Resources page.

31. How important are your partner's loyalty and fidelity to you?

Not important = 1 9 = Very important

Diane thought Robert would answer: 6	Robert answered: 4	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 5	Diane answered: 4	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

Each couple will define for themselves what constitutes loyalty and fidelity within their unique relationship. The most important thing is to discuss this topic openly and honestly. Trust is a cornerstone of a successful relationship, and it is important that you understand and respect each other's perspective and come to an agreement on this issue. Once trust is violated, it is very difficult to restore.

If the issue of fidelity or loyalty is a source of conflict in your relationship, you may benefit from some couples counseling. See the Resources page.

32. How important to you is your partner's honesty?

Not important = 1 9 = Very important

Diane thought Robert would answer: 7	Robert answered: 5	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 6	Diane answered: 5	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

Honesty is one of the qualities that are often very high on the list when describing an ideal partner. Yet, most of us exercise selective honesty in life. Small embellishments, subtle stretching of the truth, and seemingly innocent omissions all are part of daily communication.

For a relationship to deepen and mature, a foundation of trust must be built, and each couple will determine what areas of life require absolute honesty. Obviously, anything that affects the health or wellbeing of your partner needs to be disclosed. Lying or withholding relevant information corrodes the precious bond of a relationship, and once trust is broken it is very difficult to rebuild.

While we all want a partner who is trustworthy, brutal honesty may not always be preferable. Most of us are not really looking for an honest answer to the question "Do these pants make me look fat?" Most likely, what we really want is simple reassurance that we are loved and accepted, a universal human need.

Learning to communicate openly and honestly while remaining sensitive to the feelings of your partner is a life-long endeavor. If the issue of honesty or dishonesty is a continuing source of conflict in your relationship, you may benefit from some couples counseling. See the Resources page.

33. How important to you is your partner's sense of responsibility?

Not important = 1 9 = Very important

Diane thought Robert would answer: 8	Robert answered: 6	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 7	Diane answered: 6	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

This can be a deep trouble spot in relationships when a partner is seen as refusing to accept responsibility for his or her action (or lack of action). We all make mistakes, but there are some who refuse to accept responsibility for theirs. How easy it would be if we were only held responsible for our successes!

As a couple, it may be helpful to define what is considered responsible behavior in the context of your relationship. It is important to be clear on what each of you contributes to the partnership and how responsibilities are shared.

34. How important is it that your partner be liked by your family?

Not important = 1 9 = Very important

Diane thought Robert would answer: 9	Robert answered: 7	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 6	Diane answered: 7	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

In a utopian world, we would all want the person we love to be loved and accepted by all of our family members. However, few people are loved by all, and the importance of family acceptance will play a unique role in each relationship.

Whether you consider your family's attitude toward your partner important or not, this is an issue that deserves discussion, since it can have serious repercussions down the road, especially if children are, or will be, part of the picture.

If your family does not approve of or accept your partner, it is important to find out why. An open dialogue can help clarify family concerns. Reservations about a partner may be valid if someone close to you sees an aspect of your relationship they consider unhealthy or even dangerous. Address their concerns, and then make an honest assessment for yourself.

In some instances, family members may be highly opinionated with regard to religion, race, ethnicity or cultural background and simply unable or unwilling to accept any relationship other than what is considered traditional. Over time, they may relax their resistance and come to accept your partner. In the meanwhile, it is important to consider how this will impact your life.

35. How comfortable are you discussing politics with your partner?

Not at all = 1 9 = Completely comfortable

Diane thought Robert would answer: 1	Robert answered: 8	Diane's Empathy-Index: 7
Robert thought Diane would answer: 7	Diane answered: 8	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

There is a well-known married couple who each advised succeeding American presidents belonging to different political parties. They were vociferous ideologues of their parties, yet were loving partners in private life.

Politics and religion are probably the two topics that can arouse the greatest emotional opinions and perhaps this couple is more the exception than the rule. The point being, however, that there does not have to be total unanimity of opinion in a relationship. As in all things, tolerance and respect of a differing opinion can be the source of a profoundly interesting relationship.

Remember, it is possible to agree to disagree. As a famous historical figure once said, "Sir, I do not agree with anything you said but I would defend, to the death, your right to say it."

36. Do you see aging or dependent parents as a current or potential problem in your relationship?

No = 1 9 = Yes

Diane thought Robert would answer: 2	Robert answered: 9	Diane's Empathy-Index: 7
Robert thought Diane would answer: 8	Diane answered: 9	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

When we are young we feel eternal, and we usually imbue that attribute to our parents, as well. However, we will all grow older and many of us will have to face the fact that we may need to help care for at least one parent. In some societies, the elderly are given an honor and stature that is, sadly, becoming less and less important in today's fast-paced, mobile world.

True, for many of us, regardless how much we love and respect a parent, it can be a financial, as well as an emotional, hardship. Fortunately, today there are many resources that can be turned to for help. See the Resources page for references.

37. How much of the communication, or "talking about feelings", in your relationship is initiated by you?

None = 1 9 = All of it

Diane thought Robert would answer: 3	Robert answered: 9	Diane's Empathy-Index: 6
Robert thought Diane would answer: 9	Diane answered: 1	Robert's Empathy-Index: 8

For many generations, a great disservice was done to boys. They were not encouraged to express their feelings. Most were taught that, to be a man, they had to be strong and stoic. Boys were considered "sissies" if they cried. As a result, many men find it difficult to identify their feelings, let alone express them. Thankfully, this indoctrination has started to shift and, although we have a long way to go, the emotional needs of boys are being addressed more today than ever.

Although most women generally have been given more freedom in the emotional realm and have less trouble expressing themselves, many find it difficult, frightening or painful. Yet communicating our feelings, whether we are male or female, can be extraordinarily healing. Intimacy and bonding deepen when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable and express how we feel. However, this can only happen when there is a sense of safety and respect. Recognize the opportunity for growth that sharing your feelings provides. Be willing to listen to each other without judgment.

38. How much do you hold back communicating your inner feelings to your partner?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very much

Diane thought Robert would answer: 4	Robert answered: 5	Diane's Empathy-Index: 1
Robert thought Diane would answer: 5	Diane answered: 2	Robert's Empathy-Index: 3

Like it or not, men and women process their feelings and communicate them differently. While men generally tend to focus on finding a logical solution to problems and often want to find the solution by themselves, most women find that talking about a situation with another helps them to work through it. Women often have a more developed emotional vocabulary and can more easily articulate their feelings, whereas men have not been trained in our society to identify and express their emotions.

Disappointment is often the result of an unrealistic expectation. Some women expect that they should be able to talk with their partners the same way that they are able to talk with their female friends. They are often frustrated by what they consider a lack of communication, while men may feel that their partner wants to talk endlessly without actually coming to a conclusion.

Create a safe space for expression of feelings within your relationship, such as a quiet walk. Fear of judgment or rejection can so easily inhibit communication, and finding a win-win balance can be daunting. It is, however, absolutely essential to help the relationship mature and deepen.

39. How comfortable are you discussing the topic of having children with your partner?

Very Uncomfortable = 1 9 = Very Comfortable

Diane thought Robert would answer: 5	Robert answered: 4	Diane's Empathy-Index: 1
Robert thought Diane would answer: 4	Diane answered: 3	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

It seems like a no-brainer, but it's astonishing how many people avoid talking deeply and sincerely about this issue until it's an actuality. Get very clear on where you and your partner stand on this issue, and proceed deliberately and consciously.

For information on safe sex, birth control, and infertility see the Resources page.

40. On average, what share of all household chores do you do? If you don't live together, consider chores that you could share, such as meal preparation, washing dishes, taking out the trash, etc.

None = 1 9 = All

Diane thought Robert would answer: 6	Robert answered: 3	Diane's Empathy-Index: 3
Robert thought Diane would answer: 3	Diane answered: 4	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

There is no magic formula for handling and sharing the responsibilities of day-to-day domestic life, and negotiating a win-win balance can be a challenge for any couple. Perception is key here. What seems like a fair share to one partner may not feel the same for the other. There is no right or wrong ratio when it comes to domestic chores, but having a realistic and acceptable perspective about who does what in the household can be very helpful.

41. Are you content with the current domestic roles assumed by your partner and you?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very much

Diane thought Robert would answer: 7	Robert answered: 2	Diane's Empathy-Index: 5
Robert thought Diane would answer: 2	Diane answered: 5	Robert's Empathy-Index: 3

It is quite common for a couple to agree on certain roles, such as one partner predominantly working outside the house and the

other doing most of the household chores. The caveat here is to agree, rather than to expect. Even in these fixed roles, however, it can be eye-opening to swap roles on occasion and let one partner cook and put the kids to bed while the other washes the car or mows the grass.

A healthy relationship is open to continuous re-negotiation. Listen to each other, and find what works for both of you.

42. How important to you is the celebration of significant anniversaries and holidays?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very important

Diane thought Robert would answer: 8	Robert answered: 1	Diane's Empathy-Index: 7
Robert thought Diane would answer: 1	Diane answered: 6	Robert's Empathy-Index: 5

Commemorating anniversaries (or not doing so) varies depending on cultural, religious and social backgrounds. Unless religious or cultural beliefs dictate otherwise, knowing and acknowledging the events that hold special significance for your partner can help to encourage you to find ways to express your affection.

43. Assume that you are going out and you don't think your partner is dressed appropriately. Are you comfortable asking her/him to dress differently?

Very Uncomfortable = 1 9 = Very comfortable

Diane thought Robert would answer: 9	Robert answered: 6	Diane's Empathy-Index: 3
Robert thought Diane would answer: 7	Diane answered: 7	Robert's Empathy-Index: 0

Attire and appearance can hold dramatic significance, depending on an individual's age, cultural background, tastes, preferences and the social circumstances. For some, clothes are simply necessary for warmth and privacy. For others, style and appearance are an integral element of self-identity. One partner may identify strongly with his or her partner's appearance, while the other partner holds a 'do your own thing' kind of attitude. Wherever you fall within the spectrum is not the essential issue. Communication is the key here.

Coming to a common ground of mutual acceptance can be a daunting journey. Be honest in your assessment of your feelings:

Are you overly concerned with appearances? If so, you may need to relax a little and accept your partner's personal expression.

Are you embarrassed by your partner's appearance? If you feel that your partner is expressing a lack of respect to you, or the occasion, by an inappropriate appearance, the underlying issue of that respect needs to be explored. On the other hand, if you are overly identified with your partner's appearance, you may need to develop a stronger sense of self and relax a little bit.

If you do feel that your partner is dressed inappropriately, find a way to express your concern that does not shame your partner. (Tip: Avoid the proverbial "You're not going to wear THAT, are you?")

44. How comfortable would you be if your partner asked you to dress differently?

Very Uncomfortable = 1 9 = No Problem

Diane thought Robert would answer: 1	Robert answered: 7	Diane's Empathy-Index: 6
Robert thought Diane would answer: 8	Diane answered: 8	Robert's Empathy-Index: 0

Response to compliments versus criticism is fairly universal. Starting early in life, verbal and non-verbal messages of approval go a long way in building our self-esteem. Children who are given positive feedback usually mature with a healthy sense of themselves. Unfortunately, many of us received less than positive reinforcement in the past and may feel more vulnerable regarding this issue.

If being asked to dress differently is a reasonable request, but "pushes your resistance button," it may indicate an unresolved issue. If you feel threatened or disrespected by the request, communicate your feelings to your partner. Your partner may not be aware of how this request affects you.

On the other hand, if the request seems unreasonable, it might be an opportunity to reestablish a healthy boundary in what you consider a personal expression of yourself. Honest communication and working towards a win-win situation should bring this issue into balance.

45. Do you think occasional separations (business trips, short vacations, etc.) are (or could be) good for your relationship?

No = 1 9 = Yes

Diane thought Robert would answer: 2	Robert answered: 8	Diane's Empathy-Index: 6
Robert thought Diane would answer: 7	Diane answered: 9	Robert's Empathy-Index: 2

The need for separation and space varies from individual to individual, as does the harmonious ratio of togetherness and separation for each couple. No matter how much we love our partner, most of us would find 24/7 to be a challenge. Find what works for you.

Some may find that separate vacations provide the opportunity to not only recharge personal batteries but also rekindle the longing for their partner's company. Others may find the idea of going their separate ways threatening to the relationship or simply undesirable.

Talking about this issue can open another door into self-discovery. What feelings rise to the surface when considering the prospect of a brief separation from your partner? Excitement? Fear? Guilt? Trust? Doubt? Anger? Hurt? Insecurity? Curiosity? Loneliness? Comfort?

46. Do you encourage your partner to seek creative outlets of her/his own personal interests?

No = 1 9 = Yes

Diane thought Robert would answer: 2	Robert answered: 9	Diane's Empathy-Index: 7
Robert thought Diane would answer: 8	Diane answered: 1	Robert's Empathy-Index: 7

Each individual has a need for creative expression, and exploring our own interests allows us to grow and develop as individuals. We not only enjoy ourselves more, but we also have more to bring to the relationship when we feel enriched by our own creative endeavors.

Often, people put off pursuing their unique gifts, talents and interests for the sake of career and/or family responsibilities. Later in life, they are often faced with the questions of "Who am I?" "What more do I want out of life?" Pursuing our passions in life is an essential element in leading a balanced and healthy life. Supporting each other in finding even small ways to integrate creative interests into busy schedules can provide tremendous nourishment on an emotional level.

Take turns sharing with your partner what interests and inspires you. Ask your partner for the support that you would find the most helpful.

47. How satisfied are you with the recreational activities that you and your partner share?

Not at all = 1 9 = Absolutely

Diane thought Robert would answer: 3	Robert answered: 9	Diane's Empathy-Index: 6
Robert thought Diane would answer: 9	Diane answered: 2	Robert's Empathy-Index: 7

This seems obvious on the surface- you either do, or you don't, enjoy the same things- and enjoying the same things does not necessarily determine the success or happiness of your relationship.

Recognizing how your partner feels about the activities that you both pursue can make a big difference. It is surprising how many people express a sense of dissatisfaction in the recreational activities that they share as a couple. Early on, it can be easy for one partner to defer to the interests of the other in an attempt to develop the relationship. These activities can then become the routine, repeated year after year without question, leaving the compliant partner feeling unfulfilled or resentful. The important thing is to negotiate a balance that works for both of you.

Make a list of the recreational activities that you currently engage in with your partner and rate them on a scale from 1 (Do not like) to 9 (Enjoy very much). Compare results, and negotiate a win-win balance.

Make another list of new activities that you would like to try with your partner. Share your lists with each other and compile a new joint list. If an activity appears on one list and not the other, some bartering might be required.

48. Do you feel that you and your partner have an equal say in where to spend major holidays and vacations, or does one of you usually decide?

One decides = 1 9 = Equal say

Diane thought Robert would answer: 4	Robert answered: 2	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 1	Diane answered: 3	Robert's Empathy-Index: 2

Again, a healthy relationship is one in which the needs of both partners are met. Whatever works for you both is what works. The most important thing is to communicate your feelings. If you feel that this issue is out of balance in your relationship, tell your partner and re-negotiate this important aspect of your relationship.

Ask each other the following questions:

Do you feel that both your interests are being considered in the planning of vacations and holidays?

If you are the one who does most or all of the planning, do you enjoy it or does it feel like a burden?

How can you share the responsibility and planning so that it works for both of you?

49. If you have a pet or pets, are you and your partner both satisfied with the number and the kind of pets?

No = 1 9 = Yes

Diane thought Robert would answer: 5	Robert answered: 3	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 2	Diane answered: 4	Robert's Empathy-Index: 2

This can be a very strong social and even cultural issue. For some people unaccustomed to pets, even a single pet is too much. For others, the more the merrier. An exclusive "dog person" linking up with an equally devoted "cat person" can be a challenge. Hopefully, this issue is discussed during the early stages of the relationship. Where love is concerned, something satisfactory can usually be worked out.

50. Does the amount of time or attention that you give to a pet interfere with your relationship with your partner?

No = 1 9 = Yes

Diane thought Robert would answer: 6	Robert answered: 4	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 2	Diane answered: 5	Robert's Empathy-Index: 3

Most partners will adamantly disagree, but this is an appropriate question in terms of jealousy. A pet can take attention away from a partner and he or she can be left with feelings of neglect. These feelings can surface if one partner would like some personal time together while the other feels the pet will be lonely if left behind. Because most partners are reluctant to admit these feelings openly, they often reside under the surface and end up being expressed in a completely different context. If a pet is considered a "family member," remember that even children are more socially adjusted if they learn to function apart from a parent on occasion. We can all learn to appreciate the unconditional love provided by a pet, but don't ignore the feelings of a loving partner, either.

51. Do you agree with your partner regarding any spending limits or other budgetary restrictions in your relationship?

Not at all = 1 9 = Absolutely

Diane thought Robert would answer: 7	Robert answered: 5	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 3	Diane answered: 6	Robert's Empathy-Index: 3

This issue can make or break a relationship, and nothing can substitute for open, honest communication. Each partner must respect the needs of the other, and each partner's contribution to the relationship must be acknowledged. Disparate incomes can set up subtle (and not-so-subtle) power and control dynamics within the relationship. This can result in resentment and frustration. Earning and spending habits are influenced by our social and childhood experiences, becoming deeply engrained patterns by the time we reach adulthood.

Creating financial stability can be a challenge for many couples, regardless of income. Unhealthy financial behavior, such as compulsive shopping, excessive gambling, or generally living beyond one's means, can be an indication of a deeper unresolved emotional issue.

If budgeting disagreements are frequent and unresolved in your relationship, get some help... fast! You may benefit from individual or couples counseling and/or financial consultation.

52. Would you say that major decisions are more likely to be made by just one of you, or are they generally equally shared?

Just one of us = 1 9 = Equally shared

Diane thought Robert would answer: 8	Robert answered: 6	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 4	Diane answered: 7	Robert's Empathy-Index: 3

The term "major decisions" will change over time as a relationship grows and deepens. Where to have dinner and what movie to see may qualify as major decisions when first getting to know each other. Later on, matters like where to live and what school to enroll your children in come to the forefront. There is no absolute right or wrong way for couples to make decisions, but the needs of both partners should be considered and made a part of the process.

53. How comfortable are you with the way that you and your partner make major decisions?

Very Uncomfortable = 1 9 = Very Comfortable

Diane thought Robert would answer: 9	Robert answered: 7	Diane's Empathy-Index: 2
Robert thought Diane would answer: 5	Diane answered: 8	Robert's Empathy-Index: 3

This issue can be a cornerstone of a healthy and happy relationship, but feeling that the balance of power leans too heavily in one direction or the other can cause serious problems. Patterns are established early in a relationship, and if one partner repeatedly capitulates to the other, it may become more difficult for that partner to participate in the decision-making process later on. Create a safe space in which both of you can voice your opinions, and then negotiate a win-win solution.

54. If you are feeling amorous, what are the chances you will initiate making love?

Probably not = 1 9 = Absolutely

Diane thought Robert would answer: 1	Robert answered: 8	Diane's Empathy-Index: 7
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Robert thought Diane would answer: 6 Diane answered: 9 Robert's Empathy-Index: 3

Next to money, the most charged issue in a relationship is sex, and it can be one of the most difficult subjects to discuss.

Some issues that need to be addressed are:

Is the initiation of lovemaking done mostly by one partner or is it shared?

If you want to initiate lovemaking, but don't, what stops you?

Do you have fixed ideas about which partner should initiate sex?

Are you and your partner satisfied with the arrangement as it is now or would you prefer a change?

55. How important is it to you to be able to "cuddle" without sex with your partner?

Not important = 1 9 = Very important

Diane thought Robert would answer: 1 Robert answered: 8 Diane's Empathy-Index: 7

Robert thought Diane would answer: 6 Diane answered: 1 Robert's Empathy-Index: 5

Often, women are the ones who express the need for the emotional nurturing that comes from cuddling, but men need this nourishment as well. Loving touch (without the pressure of it necessarily resulting in intercourse) stimulates the immune system, soothes the nervous system, and prolongs health and longevity for both sexes.

Discuss your needs openly and honestly. Share with each other the kinds of cuddling and touching that you find the most relaxing and nurturing, then take turns treating each other to what is most pleasurable.

56. How comfortable are you discussing your desire (or lack of desire) for sex with your partner?

Very Uncomfortable = 1 9 = No Problem

Diane thought Robert would answer: 2 Robert answered: 9 Diane's Empathy-Index: 7

Robert thought Diane would answer: 8 Diane answered: 2 Robert's Empathy-Index: 6

Libido changes dramatically in the course of our lives, and can be influenced by a myriad of factors including stress, physical illness, medication, biochemical imbalances, hormone levels, and emotional issues. A woman's sexual desire can fluctuate significantly with the hormonal changes of menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause. As they age, men produce less testosterone and may experience a decrease in libido.

Open communication about sexual desire and/or lack of desire is the key to maintaining an intimate relationship. If one partner desires sex more often than the other, a win-win balance needs to be found. If lack of libido concerns you, consult with your physician to explore any biological factors that might be involved. If sexual desire (or lack of desire) is a continuing point of conflict in your relationship, you may benefit from some couples counseling.

57. How much of your enjoyment of sex comes from giving pleasure to your partner?

None = 1 9 = All of it

Diane thought Robert would answer: 3 Robert answered: 9 Diane's Empathy-Index: 6

Robert thought Diane would answer: 9 Diane answered: 3 Robert's Empathy-Index: 6

No act is more intimate than the act of making love, and the ebb and flow of pleasure it brings bonds us to each other. Giving and receiving can be equally pleasurable when we attune ourselves to our partner's subtle (and not so subtle) responses.

58. How comfortable are you asking your partner for what you want or need sexually?

Uncomfortable = 1 9 = Comfortable

Diane thought Robert would answer: 4 Robert answered: 1 Diane's Empathy-Index: 3

Robert thought Diane would answer: 5 Diane answered: 4 Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

Open communication is key in developing a fulfilling sexual partnership. Most of us have been programmed not to discuss sex, let alone to ask for what we want or need, and we usually hope our partner will be psychic enough to know what we want automatically!

Let your partner know what you enjoy the most in lovemaking. Feel free to make suggestions of things that you might like to try. Never hesitate to let your partner know if you are uncomfortable about what he or she may be asking of you. Likewise, a truly loving partner will not ask for anything that he or she knows makes the other partner uncomfortable... either emotionally or physically.

Once we actually open this communication and discuss our preferences, it becomes much easier, and can be an intimate experience in and of itself. Sit with your partner and take turns telling each other what you enjoy most in your lovemaking.

59. How open are you to exploring new ways to maintain, or increase, mutual sexual pleasure with your partner?

Not open = 1 9 = Very open

Diane thought Robert would answer: 5	Robert answered: 2	Diane's Empathy-Index: 3
Robert thought Diane would answer: 6	Diane answered: 5	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

For most couples, the initial blaze of sexual intimacy experienced early in the relationship wanes as time passes. It may not be realistic to expect the level of intensity to remain the same as the relationship moves beyond infatuation and into maturity, but care must be taken to keep sexual intimacy alive and well. Mutual enjoyment and satisfaction strengthen the bond and help to promote and maintain a happy, successful relationship.

To keep the sexual experience "fresh" some research and exploration may be in order. Never before has there been so much assistance in this area, from books and videos to counseling, workshops and gadgets. See the Resources page.

60. Do you believe in a higher "spirit" or "being" beyond your own mortality?

No = 1 9 = Yes

Diane thought Robert would answer: 6	Robert answered: 3	Diane's Empathy-Index: 3
Robert thought Diane would answer: 7	Diane answered: 6	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

Throughout history, human beings have sought a higher truth, and each society has developed its own pathway and belief system. Regardless of religion or creed, each of us answers this question for ourselves in our own way. Discussing this question with a proper respect for each other's beliefs can bring a tremendous depth and richness to any relationship.

61. Do you believe in any form of spiritual "after-life"?

No = 1 9 = Yes

Diane thought Robert would answer: 7	Robert answered: 4	Diane's Empathy-Index: 3
Robert thought Diane would answer: 8	Diane answered: 7	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

For some, this question is of paramount importance, and belief in an after-life may deeply influence one's actions throughout his or her life. Others may view this life as the one great opportunity to be embraced wholeheartedly, leaving the question of an after-life to be answered when they get there. Mutual respect for each other's spiritual path is paramount in a healthy relationship.

62. How tolerant are you of other racial or ethnic groups?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very much

Diane thought Robert would answer: 8	Robert answered: 5	Diane's Empathy-Index: 3
Robert thought Diane would answer: 9	Diane answered: 8	Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

Young children of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds will play together quite naturally, finding ways to cooperate and communicate that include body language, gestures, and facial expressions, along with the language skills they may have developed. Gradually, those same children usually adopt the attitudes and beliefs of their parents and communities, and will become more aware of their differences than their similarities. Although each individual is unique, as human beings we are more similar than different, and tolerance plays a major role in peaceful co-existence.

63. Do you and your partner share similar spiritual beliefs?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very much

Diane thought Robert would answer: 9	Robert answered: 6	Diane's Empathy-Index: 3
Robert thought Diane would answer: 9	Diane answered: 9	Robert's Empathy-Index: 0

Some couples happily accommodate diverse religious backgrounds, while others find comfort in sharing similar spiritual beliefs. Each person who seeks spiritual fulfillment in life will find his or her own way and, as partners, we have a wonderful opportunity to support each other in finding what brings meaning into our lives.

64. Would you like for religion or spirituality to play a greater role in your relationship?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very much

Diane thought Robert would answer: 1	Robert answered: 7	Diane's Empathy-Index: 6
Robert thought Diane would answer: 9	Diane answered: 2	Robert's Empathy-Index: 7

Individual religious or spiritual needs can change as we mature and grow, and a partnership may need to shift in order to accommodate this important aspect of life. Be willing to share your feelings with each other, and respect each other's needs.

65. Do you believe that children should be taught a sense of religion or spirituality?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very much

Diane thought Robert would answer: 2	Robert answered: 8	Diane's Empathy-Index: 6
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Robert thought Diane would answer: 9 Diane answered: 3 Robert's Empathy-Index: 6

Whether you believe that children should be given a foundation of religious or spiritual beliefs or not, this is one of a multitude of issues that every couple needs to discuss before starting a family.

66. How comfortable are you discussing spiritual or religious beliefs with your partner?

Not at all = 1 9 = Very comfortable

Diane thought Robert would answer: 3 Robert answered: 9 Diane's Empathy-Index: 6
Robert thought Diane would answer: 9 Diane answered: 4 Robert's Empathy-Index: 5

There are so many different interpretations, even within a single belief system, that can strike a chord of disharmony in the closest relationship. Passionate discussion can be enlightening as long as each is open to hearing the other's point of view. The key here is tolerance. If one partner turns a discussion of a belief into a personal goal of domination of their opinion, it is almost certain to end in discomfort on both sides. Listen to each other and agree to respect each other's beliefs.

67. Would you confront your partner over an act of dishonesty, immorality or abusive behavior?

No = 1 9 = Yes

Diane thought Robert would answer: 4 Robert answered: 9 Diane's Empathy-Index: 5
Robert thought Diane would answer: 8 Diane answered: 5 Robert's Empathy-Index: 3

We are all accountable for our actions and behavior, and we owe it to ourselves and each other to be honest, trustworthy and respectful. The basic foundation of a relationship is eroded when trust is violated.

If you are uncomfortable confronting your partner over what you believe to be a misdeed, you may benefit from some counseling (see Counseling on the Resources page). If you are in an abusive relationship, see the Resources page under Abuse.

68. Let's assume you've had a fight and, subsequently, discover you are wrong. How likely are you to admit this to your partner and apologize?

Not at all = 1 9 = Absolutely

Diane thought Robert would answer: 5 Robert answered: 8 Diane's Empathy-Index: 3
Robert thought Diane would answer: 7 Diane answered: 6 Robert's Empathy-Index: 1

The willingness to apologize can go a long way in strengthening a relationship. This is, in no way, a sign of weakness. Recognizing and being willing to admit when we are wrong communicates maturity, respect and responsibility. Stubbornness can eventually wear down the all-important emotional connection between partners and jeopardize the relationship. If you are generally unable to apologize when you are wrong, you may benefit from some individual or couples counseling. See the Resources page.

69. Another fight and this time you are right. How willing are you to accept an apology from your partner, put it behind you, and move on?

Not at all = 1 9 = Absolutely

Diane thought Robert would answer: 6 Robert answered: 7 Diane's Empathy-Index: 1
Robert thought Diane would answer: 5 Diane answered: 7 Robert's Empathy-Index: 2

Gracefully accepting an apology can be a challenge. When your partner apologizes, graciously accept the apology and move on. It is self-defeating to bring up the issue again and again. And resisting the temptation to say, "I told you so!" requires strength and maturity. If you are repeatedly unable to let go of an issue after your partner has apologized, you may benefit from some individual or couples counseling. See the Resources page.

70. Do you tend to bottle up small disagreements or do you usually confront them as they occur?

Bottle up = 1 9 = Confront

Diane thought Robert would answer: 7 Robert answered: 6 Diane's Empathy-Index: 1
Robert thought Diane would answer: 5 Diane answered: 8 Robert's Empathy-Index: 3

Whether or not we are comfortable confronting issues as they arise can depend largely on the family dynamic that we experienced as we were growing up. Some couples sit down and discuss everything openly while others avoid discussion at any cost. Most fall somewhere in between.

A feeling of safety is an essential element in communicating effectively when we are upset or troubled. For someone who grew up in a situation where grievances were confronted easily, it may not seem like a big deal, but for anyone who grew up in a hostile or abusive environment, communication may be very difficult, even frightening.

Respect your partner's confrontational comfort level. Provide a safe space within which both of you can express yourselves. Listen

to each other. Make sure that each of you feels heard. You may want to try using a 'reflective listening' technique wherein Partner A states his or her point of view, while Partner B listens without interruption. Partner B can respond only when he or she has restated, to Partner A's satisfaction, what was just communicated. Each partner takes turns in this role. This technique, alone, can neutralize many an argument.

You also might want to set up a regular "relationship meeting" where you and your partner can discuss issues that may have arisen since your last meeting.

- Start by telling each other what worked and what you appreciated.
- Take turns telling each other what did not work and make suggestions as to how those situations might be handled in the future.
- If you feel that your partner deserves an apology for something, offer your apology.
- Likewise, if you feel that you deserve an apology, be specific and ask for it. Communication is key here. Glaring at your partner while drumming your fingers may not be the most effective approach, whereas sincerely telling your partner how you feel is a more likely to evoke the desired response.

This kind of communication may seem difficult at first, but after you realize how much your relationship is benefiting, you'll find that it becomes easier and easier.

71. Do you have a tendency to resurrect old, but unrelated or unresolved, hurts when arguing with your partner?

Never = 1 9 = Usually

Diane thought Robert would answer: 8	Robert answered: 5	Diane's Empathy-Index: 3
Robert thought Diane would answer: 4	Diane answered: 9	Robert's Empathy-Index: 5

It is often said that the gauge of a healthy relationship is not whether a couple fights, but how they fight. The objective in an argument is not to win, because that automatically means that one of you has to lose. A win-win compromise of some sort needs to be negotiated.

Bringing up old, unrelated issues during an argument may be an indication that you did not feel heard or understood in a previous conflict and you are still carrying the emotional residue. Or it may be an attempt to avoid the actual issue at hand. Be willing to explore what you are feeling so that you can accurately give voice to what is bothering or upsetting you.

Decide what you want as a result of the argument and be willing to state it clearly. Sometimes, just being heard and understood is enough to resolve the conflict and the reflective listening technique described earlier can be helpful. If you want your partner to change his or her behavior, be clear on what you need and communicate it without blame, shame or disrespect.

Coming to a win-win conclusion requires compromise, but it does not mean that you have to give up all of who you are. Each partner's needs must be met in some way, and each partner's dignity needs to be preserved. Resorting to name-calling or denigration erodes the intimate bond of a relationship.

Everyone fears rejection and needs to feel appreciated, accepted and respected. Often, an argument over small irritations can simply be a request for some reassurance in disguise. Let your partner know that you care.

72. If you had a serious disagreement with your partner that had reached a stalemate, how willing would you be to seek help from an outside source?

Would not = 1 9 = Definitely willing

Diane thought Robert would answer: 9	Robert answered: 4	Diane's Empathy-Index: 5
Robert thought Diane would answer: 3	Diane answered: 1	Robert's Empathy-Index: 2

Never before has so much information and assistance been available to couples- through counseling, workshops, books, magazine articles, the internet, etc. Empathy-Index.com is one such resource that has been developed to provide you with insight into your partner's feelings and views, which will, hopefully, bring you both much closer together. See the Resources page under Couples Counseling.

Your Empathy-Index Summary Report

The following summaries are based on how, and how many of the *Empathy-Index* questions that each of you answered. Please see the opening "*Empathy-Index* Report" for interpretation of the following scores.

Diane's Group Empathy Index Tallies:

Self-Perception:	3.44
Health & Personal Lifestyle:	3.52
Sexuality:	5.00
Conflict Resolution:	2.60
Morality & Spirituality:	4.11
Relationship Style:	3.58

Robert's Group Empathy Index Tallies:

Self-Perception:	2.36
Health & Personal Lifestyle:	2.43
Sexuality:	3.29
Conflict Resolution:	2.60
Morality & Spirituality:	2.78
Relationship Style:	2.58

Diane's Overall Empathy Index: 3.53

Robert's Overall Empathy Index: 2.54

Your Partnership Empathy Index: 3.04